

Today ground will be broken on a new headquarters for the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue. Typically, groundbreaking ceremonies aren't headline news, but I thought you might be interested to know more about the tremendous importance of this development to Nebraska and the nation.

In 1946, the United States established the Strategic Air Command at Offutt Air Force Base to detect, deter, and prevent nuclear attacks against the U.S. It did the job thoroughly and expertly throughout the tension-filled era of the Cold War with the former Soviet Union. At the end of that period, however, there was a clear need to reorganize the Strategic Air Command.

In 1992, USSTRATCOM was charged with taking a broader role in nuclear security with an emphasis on systems modernization. Today, USSTRATCOM also has responsibility for responding to new challenges and developments in space, building cyberspace capability and capacity, preparing for uncertainty, and partnering with other combatant commands as necessary. Its core mission centers on ensuring peace and preventing the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction.

At a recent briefing at USSTRATCOM headquarters deep in the command center beyond multiple security layers and blast-proof doors, I overlooked a room packed with the most advanced technology and dedicated military service members watching multiple indicators and information systems. Before you worry that I am giving away state secrets, I am told the Russians at one time also toured this facility. Interestingly, they expressed surprise at the capability on display!

The nerve center of our country's nuclear command system is limited in its capacity to support and house all the technology necessary to synchronize mission operations. The new command and control facility will expand the USSTRATCOM mission capability, especially for the growing space and cyber missions. In the post-Cold War era, these missions are particularly important in order to protect our country from ever-changing threats to our national security.

The new headquarters further solidifies Offutt Air Force Base's role as a key economic and community partner to Bellevue and the Omaha metro area. This major construction project will provide great benefits to nearby Nebraska families and small businesses. The job is expected to employ 100 workers in the first year, increasing to 1,200 people by the project's third year. For

perspective regarding the scale of this work, the new headquarters is slated to receive approximately 40 percent of the U.S. Air Force construction budget in the coming year.

This week I was also pleased to help announce a new partnership between USSTRATCOM and the University of Nebraska. The newly formed University-Affiliated Research Center (UARC) will employ the talents of University of Nebraska research scientists to provide research and development services in support of USSTRATCOM's diverse missions. This new research center is one of only 14 across the country. It will strengthen our national security, enhance the critical defense systems in place at USSTRATCOM, and elevate world-class research at the University of Nebraska.

These new developments – a new headquarters for USSTRATCOM and a new university research center to assist its missions – are a win for Nebraska and a win for America. We can be proud that a key component of our national defense is housed right here in Nebraska, and that Nebraskans will play a critical role in major new steps to enhance and improve our national security infrastructure for years to come.